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Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning (GAL)

Strategy 2020–2025







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The background features several large, semi-transparent circular icons in various colors (blue, grey, green, purple, orange) containing white line-art symbols: a checklist, a globe with hands, a pie chart, a group of people, and a lightbulb with a gear.

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UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
Feldbrunnenstraße 58
20148 Hamburg
Germany

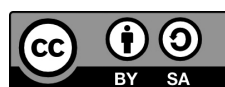
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Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning (GAL)

STRATEGY 2020–2025

Introduction

Launched in 2016, the Global Alliance for Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning (GAL) is a global platform to advance the implementation of the global literacy agenda as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) acts as GAL's Secretariat.

In alignment with the Education 2030 Framework for Action,¹ GAL fosters and coordinates a partnership of 29 developing countries towards concerted action on youth and adult literacy.²

Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL) countries:

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan

This strategy presents GAL's vision, mission, goals and objectives for the period from 2020 to 2025. It builds upon GAL's achievements from 2016 and 2019, and upon UNESCO's previous initiatives supporting youth and adult literacy, including the UN Literacy Decade (2003–2012),³ *Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE)* from 2006 to 2015,⁴ and the 2015 *Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE)*.⁵ GAL aims to help Member States achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.6:

By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women achieve literacy and numeracy.

GAL is also the main implementing body for the 2019 UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy (2020–2025).⁶

¹ UNESCO. 2016. *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration. Towards inclusive education and lifelong learning for all*. [pdf] Paris, UNESCO. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656/PDF/245656eng.pdf.multi> [Accessed 23 January 2020].

² GAL countries include 20 countries with an adult literacy rate below 50 per cent and the E-9 countries, where the largest numbers of adult illiterates live. E-9 is a forum of nine countries established during the UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) period. It includes Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Pakistan. Seventeen of the GAL countries are in Africa and seven in conflict or post-conflict situations.

³ UNESCO. 2013. Executive Board, 192nd, 2013. *Implementation of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003–2012) and specific recommendations for the post-decade period*. Paris, UNESCO. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000222586?posInSet=3&queryId=645802a9-7b92-4794-a55d-3caedc111318> [Accessed 23 January 2020].

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). 2007. *Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) 2006–2015*. Hamburg, UIL. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000152921.locale=en> [Accessed 23 January 2020].

⁵ UNESCO. 2016. *Recommendation on adult learning and education 2015*. [pdf] Paris, UNESCO. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245179> [Accessed 23 January 2020].

⁶ UNESCO. 2019. *UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy (2020–2025)*. General Conference 40th Session, Paris 2019. 40 C/25 8 November 2019. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371411> [Accessed 23 January 2020].

GAL strategy development

This five-year strategy was developed under the guidance of the GAL Steering Group and facilitated by the GAL Secretariat. It went through two stages of development and consultation. In the first phase, a draft of the strategy was presented for consultation at the GAL General Meeting, held in Paris on 10 September 2019. Based on comments from this meeting the strategy was refined. Sixteen GAL member countries provided extensive comments through an online survey conducted in November 2019. Their comments were used to further refine the strategy.

The literacy challenge

An estimated 750 million youth and adults worldwide have not achieved basic literacy – with more than 115 million of this population between the ages of 15 and 24. Women represent a disproportionate number of those who have not achieved basic literacy skills.⁷

There is therefore a growing necessity to address the learning needs of youth and women, particularly in low-income countries; in countries with high numbers of out-of-school children; and in countries where a significant proportion of the population have low mastery of foundational skills in basic education or a large proportion of adults lacking basic literacy skills. Investments in literacy and lifelong learning can make an essential contribution to the resilience and empowerment of disadvantaged populations, including youth, girls and women, indigenous peoples, those living in rural areas and those displaced by conflict and other crises.⁸

It is widely recognized that a literate environment is crucial for acquiring, using, and retaining literacy and numeracy skills. For instance, the *Second Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (2013) emphasizes that learning societies need enriched literate environments as essential support for continuing education, training, and skills development beyond basic literacy skills and for developing a literate culture.⁹

Emerging research from the learning sciences and neuroscience corroborates earlier theories about the importance of the empowerment and engagement of adults in their own learning; it also brings new evidence of neuronal plasticity that confirms the potential for adults to acquire new skills, hence strengthening the argument for larger investment in adult learning.¹⁰ From the fields of economics and sociology, it is already known that the ongoing transformations in the world economy, and the worlds of work, require stronger investments in basic and transferable skills, including through adult education.¹¹ In particular, flexible and accredited systems for adult literacy and adult basic education and the utilization of new technologies offer hopeful areas for advancing adult literacy and basic education.¹²

Yet youth and adult literacy remain low priority areas in most national education sector strategies and policies and in the programming, funding and advocacy led by international and regional bodies.

⁷ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). 2017. *Literacy rates continue to rise from one generation to the next*. Fact Sheet No. 45, Montreal, UIS.

⁸ Benavot, A. 2014. Literacy in the 21st century: Toward a dynamic nexus of social relations. *International Review of Education*, 61(3), pp. 273–294;

Bernhardt, A.C., Yorozu, R., and Medel-Añonuevo, C. 2014. Literacy and life skills education for vulnerable youth: What policy-makers can do. *International Review of Education*, 60(2014), pp. 279–288.

⁹ UIL. 2013. *Second Global Report on Adult Learning and Education: Rethinking literacy*. Hamburg, UIL.

¹⁰ Knowland, V. and Thomas, M. 2014. Educating the adult brain: How the neuroscience of learning can inform educational policy. *International Review of Education*, 60(1), pp. 99–122.

¹¹ UIL. 2016. *Third Global Report on Adult Learning and Education: The impact of adult learning and education on health and well-being, employment and the labour market, and social, civic and community life*. Hamburg, UIL.

¹² UIL. 2018. *Recognition, validation and accreditation of youth and basic education as a foundation of lifelong learning*. Hamburg, UIL.

In comparison to its sister field, early grade literacy, adult literacy suffers from limited comparative data on the efficacy and cost effectiveness of different types of policy intervention.¹³ Over the last decade, measurement and reporting on adult literacy levels, reflecting literacy as a continuum, have fallen short of the need for data to drive policy decisions at national and global levels.¹⁴

Since 2017, GAL has sought to address these challenges by fostering increased collaboration and exchange among its members. It has provided advocacy and support for global conferences and new frameworks, including around the youth and adult literacy agenda for the SDGs. GAL also has provided technical and capacity support to GAL countries, including support for South-South learning and exchange.¹⁵ It has played a role in supporting improvements in evidence and its use in youth and adult literacy policies and plans, and highlighted the importance of enhancing the resources available to fund youth and adult literacy in national sector plans.

Vision and mission

GAL's Vision and Mission Statement reflects its role as UNESCO's main platform for supporting the achievement of SDG 4.6 and implementing the *UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy (2020–2025)*. It communicates GAL's unique focus on and engagement of the 29 countries, whose policies and actions are essential for achieving SDG 4.6.

The GAL vision is summarized in SDG 4.6:

By 2030, all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy.

To realize this vision, GAL's mission is to:

support the achievement of SDG 4.6 by galvanizing action in 29 countries, through improvements in national policies, strategies, resource mobilization, evidence and innovation.

Goals and objectives

GAL's new strategy identifies specific results that can be reasonably achieved based on the resources and tools at its disposal in the areas of advocacy, evidence, norm-setting and the fostering of policy-based learning across its member countries. Each of its goals is accompanied by a Results Indicator that will be used to monitor GAL's progress through to 2025. The special role that GAL must play in advocating for enhanced resource mobilization is highlighted across the strategy and called out emphatically in Goal 1.

Furthermore, the five goals that make up GAL's new strategy closely align with the four strategic priority areas of the 2019 UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy (2020-2025); these are: (1) support Member States in developing national literacy policies and strategies; (2) address the learning needs of disadvantaged groups, particularly women and girls; (3) leverage digital technologies to expand access and improve learning outcomes; and (4) monitor progress and assess literacy skills and programmes.

¹³ Results for Development Institute (R4D). 2016. *A landscape analysis of the global literacy sector*. Paper Commissioned by Pearson for Project Literacy. Washington DC, R4D.

¹⁴ Gal, I. 2018. *Developing a monitoring scheme for adult numeracy as part of SDG indicator 4.6.1: Issues and options for discussion*. Technical report commissioned by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. Hamburg, UIL.

¹⁵ *ibid*.

UNESCO definition of literacy

Literacy is a key component of adult learning and education. It involves a continuum of learning and proficiency levels which allows citizens to engage in lifelong learning and participate fully in community, workplace and wider society. It includes the ability to read and write, to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials, as well as the ability to solve problems in an increasingly technological and information-rich environment. Literacy is an essential means of building people's knowledge, skills and competencies to cope with the evolving challenges and complexities of life, culture, economy and society.

Source: UNESCO. 2016. *Recommendation on adult learning and education 2015*, p. 7, § 4.

GAL Strategic Goals 2020–2025

GAL's five strategic goals detailed on the following pages represent a straightforward approach to enabling youth and adults from the most disadvantaged backgrounds to acquire, retain and use the literacy and numeracy skills that they need to find decent work, earn a living, contribute to their communities and societies, and fulfill their potential. Over the coming five years, GAL will engage a multiplicity of stakeholders to advocate for the importance of youth and adult literacy and to catalyse in an effective and coordinated manner efforts to improve it in the countries that need it the most.



GOAL 1: Policy and planning

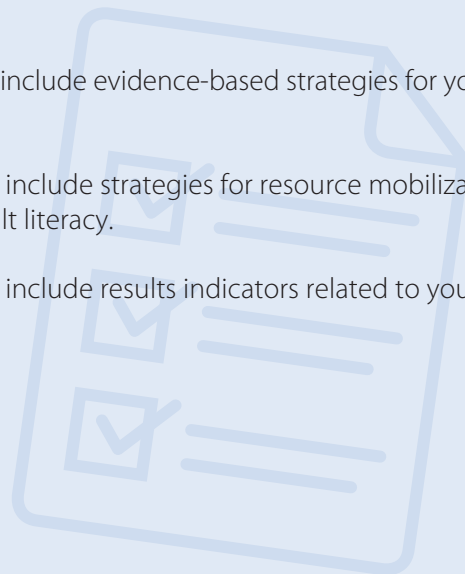
Improve national youth and adult literacy strategies, policies, resources and programmes in GAL countries.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop models and best practice guidance on how to include and finance youth and adult literacy and adult basic education in national education sector plans (ESPs) and intersectoral planning.
- Create opportunities for exchange on policy formulation, implementation and monitoring among GAL countries as well as with other countries.
- Support GAL governments to develop accreditation systems for youth and adult literacy and learning, and link these with their existing or new national qualification frameworks.
- Provide support and advocate for greater resource mobilization for youth and adult literacy in countries across the alliance.
- Effectively monitor improvements in national youth and adult literacy plans, policies and programmes, and support GAL countries to meet nationally set targets.

RESULTS INDICATORS

- An increased number of GAL countries include evidence-based strategies for youth and adult literacy in their ESPs.
- An increased number of GAL countries include strategies for resource mobilization in their ESPs to improve youth and adult literacy.
- An increased number of GAL countries include results indicators related to youth and adult literacy in their ESPs.





GOAL 2: Equity

Improve the quality of youth and adult literacy interventions for women and other disadvantaged populations in GAL countries to encourage meaningful learning outcomes.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop a common strategy for experimenting with and comparing the efficacy of different types of youth and adult literacy programmes, including those focused on multilingualism and that target disadvantaged populations, especially youth and women, and those living in rural areas.
- Create an evidence platform and community of practice to share information on cost-effective ways to improve outcomes for disadvantaged populations, such as through community learning centres (CLCs), libraries and other enhanced literate environments.
- Partner with the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) and others to explore and strengthen territorial approaches to literacy development (i.e. by promoting learning spaces/learning villages).

RESULTS INDICATOR

- An increased number of GAL countries develop cost-effective ways to improve outcomes for disadvantaged populations.





GOAL 3: Innovation

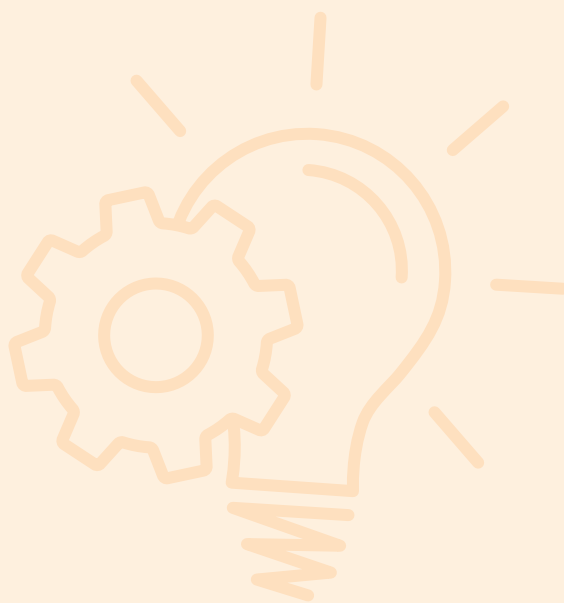
Increase the use of digital technologies to improve access to and quality of youth and adult literacy interventions.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop a framework and network of South-South cooperation so that digital technologies that support youth and adult literacy programmes can be shared and assessed.
- Develop an evidence platform and community of practice among GAL countries interested in experimenting with digital technologies.
- Foster new partnerships between researchers, digital technology companies, and youth and adult literacy providers to promote digital technology use.

RESULTS INDICATOR

- An increased number of GAL countries enhance their programmes for youth and adult literacy with the support of digital technologies.





GOAL 4: Data

Improve monitoring of and reporting on progress made in youth and adult literacy at national and global levels.

OBJECTIVES

- In collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), and in the framework of the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML), support collaboration among GAL countries to introduce new frameworks for measuring, monitoring, and evaluating progress towards the achievement of SDG indicator 4.6.1.
- Work with the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report to track funding and initiatives that support youth and adult literacy in the 29 GAL countries.
- Develop common evaluation and measurement standards based on an understanding of the cost effectiveness and efficacy of interventions to ensure better policy decisions are made.

RESULTS INDICATORS

- An increased number of GAL countries monitor and report on their progress in achieving expected literacy outcomes, as captured in SDG indicator 4.6.1.
- An increased number of GAL countries improve evaluation and measurement standards for youth and adult literacy programmes.





GOAL 5: Partnership

Strengthen GAL by developing new partnerships and diversifying sources of funding.

OBJECTIVES

- GAL brings on board new partners with technical, advocacy or policy expertise in the four strategic goal areas.
- Funding sources for GAL activities are diversified and include new sources of funding at country, regional and global levels.

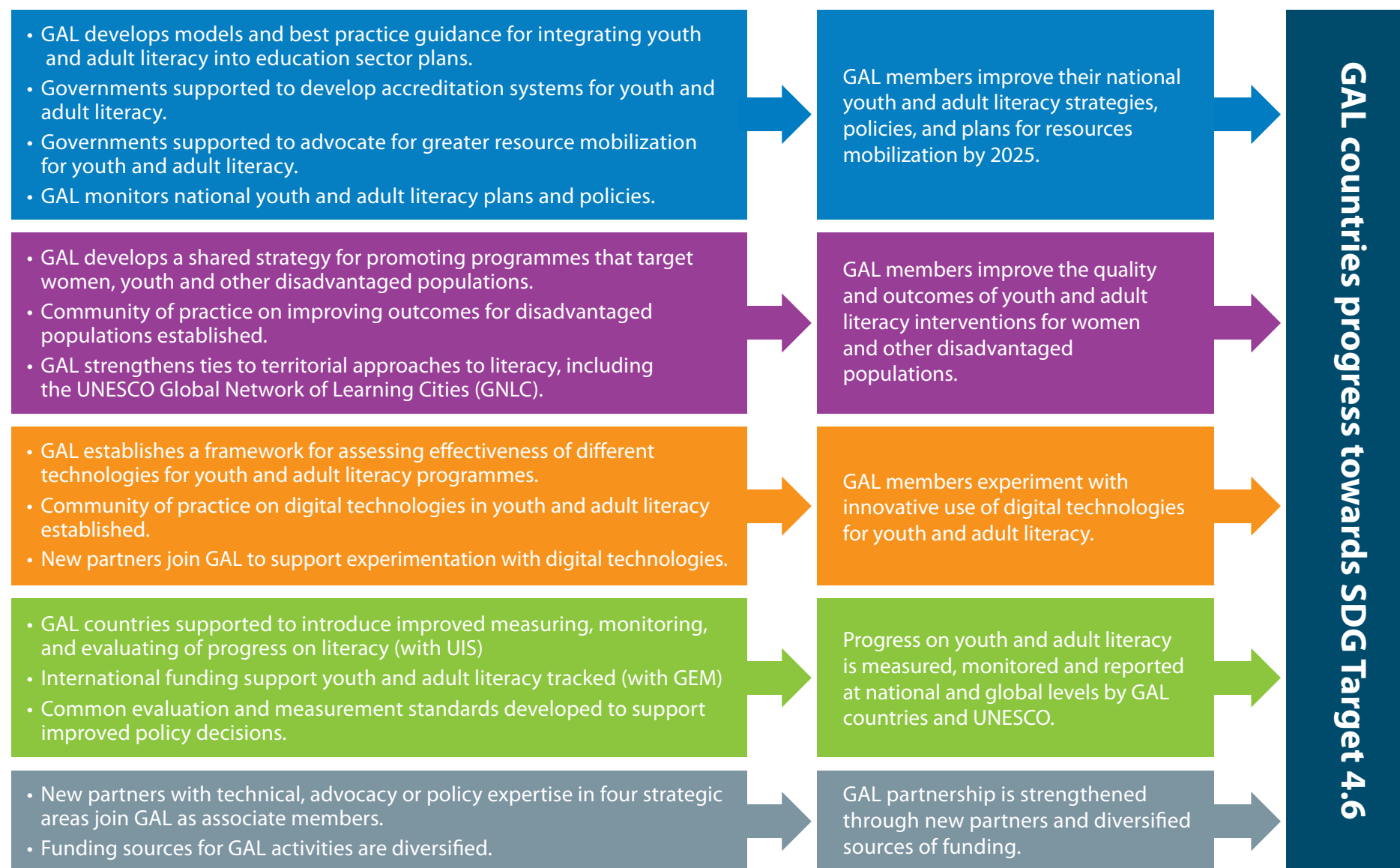
RESULTS INDICATOR

- New partners with technical, advocacy or policy expertise join and contribute to the initiatives within GAL's strategic plan by 2025.

Next steps

The GAL Strategy 2020–2025 will be disseminated to a wide range of partners and stakeholders. It will then be used to guide annual planning for the work of the Global Alliance for Literacy and as a tool for monitoring and accountability.

Theory of Change¹⁶



¹⁶A theory of change is a purposeful model of how an initiative – such as a policy, a strategy, a programme or a project – contributes through a chain of early and intermediate outcomes to the intended result. See Serrat. O. 2017. Theories of Change. In: *Knowledge Solutions*. Springer, Singapore

AT A GLANCE: GAL objectives, indicators and targets



GAL Strategic Goal 1: Policy and planning

Improve national youth and adult literacy strategies, policies and programmes in GAL countries.

OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS	TARGET 2025 (of 29 GAL countries)
Develop models and best practice guidance on how to include and finance youth and adult literacy and adult basic education in national education sector plans (ESP) and intersectoral planning.	An increased number of GAL countries include evidence-based strategies for youth and adult literacy in their ESPs.	15 countries
Create opportunities for exchange on policy formulation, implementation and monitoring among GAL countries as well as with other countries.	An increased number of GAL countries include strategies for resource mobilization in their ESPs to improve youth and adult literacy.	10 countries
Support GAL governments to develop accreditation systems for youth and adult literacy and learning, and link these with their existing or new national qualification frameworks.	An increased number of GAL countries include results indicators related to youth and adult literacy in their ESPs.	5 countries
Provide support and advocate for greater resource mobilization for youth and adult literacy in countries across the alliance.		
Effectively monitor improvements in national youth and adult literacy plans, policies and programmes and support GAL countries to meet nationally set targets.		



GAL Strategic Goal 2: Equity

Improve the quality of youth and adult literacy interventions for women and other disadvantaged populations in GAL countries to encourage meaningful learning outcomes.

OBJECTIVES	INDICATOR	TARGET 2025 (of 29 GAL countries)
Develop a common strategy for experimenting with and comparing the efficacy of different types of youth and adult literacy programmes, including those focused on multilingualism and that target disadvantaged populations, especially youth and women, and those living in rural areas.	An increased number of GAL countries develop cost-effective ways to improve outcomes for disadvantaged populations.	5 countries
Create an evidence platform and community of practice to share information on cost-effective ways to improve outcomes for disadvantaged populations, such as through community learning centres (CLCs), libraries and other enhanced literate environments.		
Partner with the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) and others to explore and strengthen territorial approaches to literacy development (i.e. by developing learning spaces/learning villages).		



GAL Strategic Goal 3: Innovation

Increase the use of digital technologies to improve access to and quality of youth and adult literacy interventions.

OBJECTIVES	INDICATOR	TARGET 2025 (of 29 GAL countries)
<p>Develop a framework for and network of South-South cooperation so that digital technologies that support youth and adult literacy programmes can be shared and assessed.</p> <p>Develop an evidence platform and community of practice among GAL countries interested in experimenting with digital technologies.</p> <p>Foster new partnerships between researchers, digital technology companies, and youth and adult literacy providers to promote digital technology use.</p>	An increased number of GAL countries enhance their national programmes for youth and adult literacy with the support of digital technologies.	10 countries



GAL Strategic Goal 4: Data

Improve monitoring of and reporting on progress made in youth and adult literacy at national and global levels.

OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS	TARGET 2025 (of 29 GAL countries)
<p>In collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), and in the framework of the Global Alliance for Monitoring Learning (GAML), support collaboration among GAL countries to introduce new frameworks for measuring, monitoring and evaluating progress towards SDG indicator 4.6.1.</p> <p>Work with the <i>Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report</i> to track funding and initiatives that support youth and adult literacy in the 29 GAL countries.</p> <p>Develop common evaluation and measurement standards based on an understanding of the cost effectiveness and efficacy of interventions to ensure better policy decisions are made.</p>	<p>An increased number of GAL countries monitor and report on their progress in achieving expected literacy outcomes, as captured in SDG indicator 4.6.1.</p> <p>An increased number of GAL countries improve evaluation and measurement standards for youth and adult literacy programmes.</p>	<p>10 countries</p> <p>15 countries</p>



GAL Strategic Goal 5: Partnership

Strengthen GAL by developing new partnerships and diversifying sources of funding.

OBJECTIVES	INDICATOR	TARGET 2025
<p>GAL brings on board new partners with technical, advocacy or policy expertise in four strategic goal areas.</p> <p>Funding sources for GAL activities are diversified and include new sources of funding at country, regional and global levels.</p>	New partners with technical, advocacy or policy expertise join and contribute to the initiatives within GAL's strategic plan by 2025..	5 new partners

Get in touch

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
GAL Secretariat
Feldbrunnenstraße 58
20148 Hamburg
Germany

Tel: + 49 (0) 40 44 80 41 - 0
Fax: + 49 (0) 40 41 077 23
Web: www.uil.unesco.org
Email: uil-galsecretariat@unesco.org

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